
China begins three days of mourning for earthquake victims in Sichuan province, with a three-minute silence and half-mast flags. Our correspondent Quentin Sommerville has sent this report from the town of Beichuan in south-western China:

For three minutes **a collective wail was heard** across the town of Beichuan as **air raid sirens** and car horns sounded the exact time when the earthquake hit China one week ago. Workers here laid **wreaths** outside the town's school. At 2.28 in the afternoon, last Monday, it was **engulfed in a landslide**, hundreds of children died.

To the side of the mourners, bodies lay waiting to be buried. Rescue work has now **resumed** and two women were found alive here this morning, but these **glimmers of hope are increasingly rare**.

Elsewhere in the province, two hundred rescue workers have been lost in **a landslide**; the **aftershocks** continue.

Quentin Sommerville, BBC News, Beichuan

Vocabulary and definitions

a collective wail	a long mournful high-pitched cry from many very sad people who have gathered in the same place at the same time
air raid sirens	devices for making a very loud noise to warn people of an attack by enemy aircraft (usually dropping bombs)
wreaths	arrangements of flowers and leaves, usually in a circular shape, used as a sign of respect and remembrance for people who have died
engulfed	completely covered, extremely badly affected
a landslide	a large mass of rock and earth moving suddenly and quickly down a mountain or cliff
resumed	begun again
glimmers of hope	here, faint signs that more people can be found alive and rescued
are increasingly rare	happen/occur less and less often
Elsewhere in	in another part of
aftershocks	small earthquakes that follow a larger one

More on this story: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7407657.stm>

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2008/05/080519_china_mourning.shtml